

2 Kings

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Second Book of the Kings using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to the Historical Books* will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don’t miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church’s criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God’s unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church’s living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit’s guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you’ll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§] And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||} and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all thi tioning,¹⁵ that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God’s g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable d the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel

Prepare

Read the Introduction to 2 Kings, paying particular attention to the *Content and Themes* of the book and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of 2 Kings to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of 2 Kings, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on 2 Kings as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:2.** Which king is Ahaziah? How much is known of him? How did he come into conflict with Elijah? What does the name Baal-zebub mean, and of what name is it a derogatory distortion? Where is Ekron?
2. **1:8.** Of whom are the garment of haircloth and the girdle of leather the distinctive dress? What does this clothing indicate? Centuries later, how will John the Baptist appear?
3. **1:10.** What comes down from heaven? For what was Elijah known? What does the incident show that God does? What two companions of Jesus appear to have this episode in mind in Lk 9:52–54?
4. **1:17.** Who is Jehoram? To what is his name sometimes shortened? What does his royal counterpart in the south share with him?

For application

1. **1:2.** Have you ever been seriously injured in an accident or known someone who has been? To whom did you (or they) look for healing and redress? How was the Lord part of this petition?
2. **1:8.** Judging from his tone, what do you think Ahaziah's attitude toward Elijah is? Of what other prophet does the description of Elijah remind you?
3. **1:9-15.** Note the change of approach of each of the captains in these verses. On whose authority do the first two rely when summoning the prophet? On whose authority does the third captain rely? How might his attitude help you approach persons in authority?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:1—8:15.** Who is the subject of these stories? How is he most remembered? What do scholars surmise about these stories? In what ways is Elisha a prophet after the likeness of Moses? How does Elisha also prefigure the Messiah?
2. **2:3.** Who are the sons of the prophets? How do prophetic guilds use the kinship language of “father” and “sons”? How does that language apply to both Elijah and Elisha? Where do communities of prophets live? Why is Elijah presumably making his final stops in these towns?
3. **2:9.** Why does Elisha request a double share of Elijah's spirit? What is the background for this request? How is Elisha confirmed as Elijah's successor?
4. **2:11.** What does Elijah's escort appear to be? What do raging flames and storm winds manifest? Who are the only two figures in the OT whose life on earth ended with a translation into heaven? What is fitting about John the Baptist's appearance as a prophet on the banks of the Jordan? How does St. Bede compare Elijah with Jesus? Elisha with the apostles?
5. **2:23.** What is significant about Bethel? What can the expression “small boys” designate? With what are these youths perhaps affiliated? Why are they mauled to death? What connotation does the Hebrew verb “go up” often have? What does it suggest that the boys are doing, and how does the Torah judge it? What does the insult “baldhead” insinuate?

For application

1. **2:9.** Read the note for this verse. Given your reception of the sacraments, what “portion” of the Holy Spirit have you received? How is that confirmed by changes in your relationship with God? What more do you think the Lord has in store for you? How much more do you want?
2. **2:15.** How does your parish or religious community respond to changes in its leadership? How do people greet new leader(s)? Are there any areas of resistance to new leadership, and how is submission manifested? What is your own attitude?
3. **2:21.** Read the note for this verse. How does St. Caesarius understand the spiritual meaning of the miracle? How has Christ, the new Elisha, restored you from evil ways to charity and righteousness?
4. **2:23–24.** If people dislike changes being made, how appropriate is it to initiate media protest campaigns or stage demonstrations of opposition? What are some ways they can make their dissatisfaction known legitimately?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:1.** How is the apparent discrepancy between the reference to Jehoshaphat's eighteenth year and the year mentioned in 1:17 best explained?
2. **3:5.** How might Moab's refusal to pay tribute to the Northern Kingdom of Israel be interpreted? Whom does the *Mesha Inscription* mention by name, and what does it celebrate about this event? What does the inscription fail to mention?
3. **3:17.** What does Elisha promise the king of Israel? What will happen to the dried-up riverbed?
4. **3:27.** What does Mesha do with his first-born son? For what is his action a desperate appeal? Whose wrath is meant by the phrase "wrath upon Israel"? What does the spectacle inspire Mesha's fighters to do?

For application

1. **3:3.** As a reminder, the "sin of Jeroboam" in 1 Kings 12 was to establish a state-devised religion for the Northern Kingdom to rival the true religion centered in Jerusalem. What does this verse in 2 Kings imply that Jehoram should have done? Why do people often cling to beliefs that a true religion brands as false?
2. **3:15.** What aids, such as music, do you use to help you concentrate? How often do you use them to focus your attention in prayer? If music helps you pray, what kind of music most appeals to you?
3. **3:27.** Read the note for this verse. Has a fit of anger or desperation ever prompted you to sacrifice a long-term resource, such as a savings account, to address a near-term need, such as hiring an attorney for a lawsuit? How did you come to the decision to make that sacrifice? To what extent was the sacrifice worth making?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **Chart: Elijah and Elisha.** How are Elijah and Elisha unlike the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others? How many miracles does the narrative of Kings attribute to Elijah? to Elisha? What is this perhaps the author's way of demonstrating about Elisha?
2. **4:16.** What will God grant the Shunammite woman? For what is it a blessing? What danger would the lack of a biological heir cause the family? What promise do Elisha's words to her recall?
3. **4:29.** Why does Elisha tell Gehazi not to salute anyone on the road? Why does Jesus give the same instruction to 70 disciples?
4. **4:32–37.** What miracle does Elisha perform? Of what is restoration to life the result? What did Elijah and the Apostle Paul do to raise the dead? How does St. Gregory relate the spiritual meaning of this episode to salvation history?
5. **4:42.** Where is Baal-shalishah? What happened to the twenty loaves of barley? How will Jesus surpass the miracle of Elisha?

For application

1. **4:1–7.** Have you ever consulted anyone for financial advice? How critical was the need for help? How faithfully did you follow the advice given? How did your overall trust in God's Providence influence the way you sought and responded to help?
2. **4:13.** What do you think the Shunammite woman's answer to Elisha means? What resources exist among your own relations to care for you when you need support? What resources are you able to offer them?
3. **4:32–35.** What is the difference between resurrection and resuscitation? What do miracles of restoration to life like this say to us regarding the resurrection of the dead? (Refer to CCC 994 for help with this question.)
4. **4:42–44.** What is the purpose of miracles like this multiplication of food? The note for this verse refers to Jesus' multiplication of food. What might be the link between Jesus' miracle and that of the Eucharist?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:1.** Of what is the victory given to Syria a reminder? In this account, what kind of disease is Naaman's leprosy? What did it not prevent Naaman from doing?

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2. **5:10.** What does Elisha's instruction to Naaman demand of him? What was Naaman expecting? What similar miracles does Jesus perform?
3. **5:14.** What does washing in the murky waters of the Jordan underscore? What is washing seven times perhaps imply that Naaman's body would experience? What does Leviticus stipulate that a person suspected of leprosy must do? According to Origen of Alexandria, how are men covered with leprosy cleansed? According to St. Ambrose, what are people like before Baptism, and what happens afterward? As a figure of future salvation, what does Naaman's immersion in the Jordan make us recognize?
4. **5:18.** What is the house of Rimmon? For what does Naaman hope by asking Elisha's pardon?

For application

1. **5:6–7.** Written correspondence such as letters and emails often miscommunicate for several reasons. What are some of them? Have you ever experienced correspondence that resulted in a miscommunication, and, if so, what problems resulted? How were any misunderstandings resolved?
2. **5:10–14.** What connection do these verses reveal between faith, pride, and humility? How does Naaman display all three? What was it about the advice of Naaman's servants that helped him change his mind? Have you ever received advice like that?
3. **5:20.** What is Gehazi's attitude toward Naaman? By implication, what is his attitude toward Elisha, given the latter's refusal to accept payment?
4. **5:22–24.** How many talents of silver did Gehazi ask of Naaman, and how many did Naaman urge him to take? Calculating from the note for v. 5, how heavy a load did the two servants have to carry for him? How was Naaman's generosity a problem for Gehazi? How is the success of a theft often a problem for the thief?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:5.** What was the axe head made of? What does the miracle of making it float to the surface show about Elisha? According to St. Justin Martyr, why did Elisha throw wood into the Jordan to raise the axe head? According to St. Ambrose, what does Elisha's invocation of the Lord have to do with our Baptism and the Cross of Christ?
2. **6:10.** What does Elisha do for the king of Israel by his prophetic knowledge? What does this make the Syrian king suspect?
3. **6:17–20.** What do these verses illustrate about the Lord? To whom is spiritual vision given, and from whom is it taken and restored again?
4. **6:25.** What does siege bring about, and what does it mean? What is the city eventually forced to witness?

For application

1. **6:15–16.** What is the difference between seeing and perceiving? What does Elisha's servant see, and what does his master help him perceive? How do you think the Lord might be leading you to perceive what he is doing in your life, despite what you see?
2. **6:22.** Read the note for this verse. What are some of the personal benefits of treating your enemies well? What does St. Paul say about getting revenge in Rom 12:19–21?
3. **6:31.** Why do you think the king of Samaria blames Elisha for the starvation and cannibalism taking place there? Where do we tend to place blame when an outbreak of disease or a sharp economic downturn—or even a long series of losses for a sports team—takes place?
4. **6:33.** How do you pray when things do not go your way or circumstances seem to conspire against you? What is the spiritual danger in getting impatient with God? Why will taking matters into your own hands not make things any better?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:1.** What does Elisha announce? What will happen the very next day? What could the city gate serve as during peacetime?

2. **7:2.** What happens to the captain who openly doubts the word of the Lord?
3. **7:6.** What did the Lord make the Syrian army hear? Into what did the sound of an approaching cavalry and chariotry send the army? Who are the Hittites?

For application

1. **7:2.** How do the captain's words betray his unbelief? Given dire circumstances like those in the previous chapter, how unreasonable is it to question promises of a sudden turnaround in fortune? Even so, how willing are you to trust the Lord to provide for you, even when circumstances look impossible?
2. **7:6–7.** What kind of event, phenomenon, or circumstance might make you panic? How do you react when you feel panic? How do you feel about yourself when the situation passes and the panic subsides?
3. **7:9.** What is the lepers' main motive for reporting the sudden good news to the king? If you stumbled on a fortune, what would motivate you to report it to the authorities rather than keep it for yourself?
4. **7:17–20.** How deserved do you think the captain's fate was? How might unbelief come to deserve death? Why does Jesus warn that those who do not believe the preaching of the Gospel will be condemned?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:3.** Why did the woman from Shunem have to appeal to the king for her house? What was the result of her appeal?
2. **8:10.** What is the meaning of Elisha's contradictory remark to Hazael? If sickness will not take the king's life, how will he die?
3. **8:16.** Who is the Jehoram mentioned here? For what is he criticized? What does his political marriage with Ahab's daughter occasion? When does Jehoram's independent rule over Judah come?
4. **8:25.** Who is Ahaziah? Why is his short reign judged an evil reign?

For application

1. **8:1.** Imagine a catastrophic failure of the electrical system in this country. What needs would you face? What kinds of arrangements would you have to make for your survival? How difficult an option would relocation become?
2. **8:12–13.** How has modern warfare become more or less humane than the evils Elisha narrates here? What military objectives lie behind the evils Elisha mentions? Why does Hazael think that doing them is for him a "great thing"?
3. **8:26–27.** Of how much of your family's history are you aware? What influence has your family's history had on your own outlook on life and your day-to-day behavior; for example, how like your parents are you? If your family has been harmed by a cycle of abuse and addiction, what can you do to break free of the cycle?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:1—10:36.** Why is Jehu the least criticized of all the northern kings? Nevertheless, why is he faulted? How long will Jehu's dynasty extend after him? How does the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III depict Jehu of Israel?
2. **9:6.** What does anointing symbolize? For whom was the rite performed? What does emptying the flask upon Jehu fulfill?
3. **9:13.** What is the meaning of placing garments on the steps under Jehu? In a similar way, what do the crowds do with Jesus on Palm Sunday, and why is this significant?
4. **9:22.** To what sorceries and harlotries is Jehu referring? What did Jezebel's corruption of Israel cause her name to stand for?
5. **9:31.** What does Jezebel mean by calling Jehu by the name of Zimri? What does she imply by this?

For application

1. **9:4–16.** The word *conspire* comes from the Latin for *to breathe with or together*. To what does it usually refer? How may it have a positive connotation? For example, how may it refer to the interaction between human beings and the Holy Spirit?
2. **9:17–20.** When touched by a "conspiracy of God", how quickly must a person act? Why can delay in responding to grace lead to its loss? Why, for example, did Jesus forbid a prospective disciple to bury his father first (in Lk 9:59–60)?

3. **9:30.** Why do you think Jezebel “painted her eyes and adorned her head” to confront Jehu, whom she knows is the murderer of his master (v. 31)? What does she know is about to happen to her? What message does she want to send by adorning herself?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Heads (10:6).** What various meanings does the Hebrew noun *ro'sh* have in the Bible? How is the flexibility of this term exploited in Jehu's letter in this verse? What does the inherent ambiguity in the word *ro'sh* enable Jehu to accomplish?
2. **10:11.** What does Jehu's violent action exceed? What had the Lord commanded him to do, and what does he proceed to do beyond that? Why does the prophet Hosea condemn him?
3. **10:15.** Who are the Rechabites? What did they idealize, and what did they deny themselves? For Jehu, what do they represent?
4. **10:19.** How are the prophets of Baal supported? What does the author of Kings acknowledge about Jehu's tactics? What do Christian moral standards say about using evil means to accomplish a good end?

For application

1. **10:9–10.** What is the implied answer to Jehu's question in v. 9? When people attribute evil (such as this massacre) to the Lord, how do you answer them?
2. **10:12–17.** Read the note for v. 11, and then look up Hos 1:4. What ultimate fate awaited the “House of Israel”? What is the difference between *zeal* and fanaticism?
3. **10:19.** Read the note for this verse. What examples can you think of where people use evil means to attain a good end? Does the end *ever* justify the means used to attain it?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **11:1–21.** With what do these verses deal? How was Athaliah's rule illegitimate from the start? What did Athaliah try to do, and whose example did she follow?
2. **11:2.** Who was Jehosheba? How did Joash survive? When does Joash come to the throne, and how long does he reign?
3. **11:4.** Who is Jehoiada, and what does he choreograph? What relation is he to the boy-king, and as what will he serve? Who are the Carites? What do they provide? When does the changing of the guard occur?
4. **11:12.** Of what is the royal crown a sign? What is the “covenant” referred to here?
5. **11:14.** What pillar is referred to here? Who do “the people of the land” appear to be? What about them has been seen on several occasions?

For application

1. **11:1.** Here, the queen mother usurps the throne of her son. How do you understand the role of Mary, heavenly Queen Mother and Mediatrix of all graces? How would you answer the objection that devotion to Mary usurps the authority of her divine Son?
2. **11:4.** Jehoiada the priest becomes the young king's protector and teacher (12:2). Who has been the most effective person (either a lay person or pastor) in your Christian life in terms of providing you with spiritual protection and instruction? How does that person's influence still manifest itself?
3. **11:17.** Have you ever joined or belonged to a renewal movement in the Church? If so, how effective has it been in renewing the parish to which you belong? What has been your role in it? If not, what prevents you from joining one? Why do such movements seem to arise in the Church from time to time?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:4–16.** What was needed on the Solomonic Temple? For what are the Temple revenues set aside? To whom is the task of repair first entrusted, but then who is later given responsibility for it?

2. **12:9.** What is the chest used as? Who served as sentries, and for what purpose?
3. **12:18.** What are votive gifts? Why are they given to the Syrians? Of what were gifts of silver and gold often the “price” in the days of the kings?

For application

1. **12:4–6.** How do you feel about priests who preach about the need for money? According to the *Catechism* (no. 2043), what does the fifth “precept of the Church” require? What is your own pattern of giving to the Church? How consistent is this pattern of giving? Have you ever considered giving a set percentage of your income or increasing the amount you give as your income increases?
2. **12:13.** What are some of the vessels used in the celebration of Catholic liturgy? How are they supposed to be made? Why would ordinary kitchen implements such as plates and bowls be unsuitable for use in the divine liturgy?
3. **12:16.** According to St. Paul, those who preach the gospel have a right to earn their living by preaching—in other words, to receive pay of some sort (1 Cor 9:14). What is the justice of this claim? What may be some of its dangers for the preacher?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:1.** Which king of Israel is Jehoahaz? For what does the narrator fault him? How did his cavalry and chariot corps come to be reduced?
2. **13:5.** What was the goal of the savior that the Lord provided Israel? Whom does the narrator have in mind?
3. **13:17.** What do prophetic actions such as this one announce? What does helping the king shoot the bow out the east window serve to prophesy? Where is Aphek?
4. **13:21.** How is Catholic teaching on the efficacy of holy relics illustrated by this episode? What do this and other passages affirm about the bodies and belongings of the saints?

For application

1. **13:3.** What does “the anger of the LORD” mean? What is the analogy used to describe it in this verse (hint: the word “kindled”)? How might God’s anger be considered an expression of his love?
2. **13:5–6.** When someone’s behavior gets him into trouble and you rescue him from its consequences, what changes in the person’s behavior would you expect to see? What would you think of the person who went back to the same behavior as before?
3. **13:19.** Imagine a boxing coach who wanted you to pretend that a punching bag was your opponent. How hard or how often would he want you to hit it? What would he say if you stopped after a few punches? Why would he ask you punch the bag in the first place?
4. **13:21.** Read the note for this verse. Why do Catholics venerate the relics of saints? What benefit would veneration of a relic be to you in your practice of the faith? What relationship should a popular devotion such as devotion to relics have to the liturgy (CCC 1675)? According to CCC 1676, why should popular devotions be purified when needed?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:1.** Which king of Judah is Amaziah? For what is he both praised and criticized? What do chronological factors suggest about his reign?
2. **14:7.** Who are the Edomites? What is Amaziah attempting to do with them? Where is the Valley of Salt?
3. **14:8.** What does Amaziah mean by calling on Jehoahaz of Israel to look him in the face? What is he about to learn?
4. **14:23.** Which Jeroboam is this? To his credit, what did he do? What made him a political “savior” of sorts? Nevertheless, why is his reign declared evil?

For application

1. **14:5.** What is your view of capital punishment? If it is to be allowed, what should be its purpose? If it is to be discontinued (see CCC 2267), what punishment should take its place and what should be its purpose?

2. **14:6.** Our culture readily punishes murderers for their crime, but little is said about what happens to their children. What would their children need from society, and what would they be more likely to get? How would you relate to the child of a convicted sex offender? How might you reach out to that child or exercise caution in relating to the child? Why would you do either?
3. **14:8–11.** *Hubris* is pride, a flaw of character that can lead to a person's downfall. Of what historical personages can you think whose hubris had that result? What, if any, hubris do you detect in yourself, and what might you do to rid yourself of it?

Chapter 15

For understanding

1. **15:1.** Which king of Judah is Azariah? What is he also known as? Although an admirable king overall, for what does the narrator criticize him? What does the parallel account in Chronicles indicate that Azariah/Uzziah did? What does Chronicles explain about the king's leprosy that is unexplained in Kings?
2. **15:8–31.** What happens in these verses? What events make for a time of power struggles and escalating violence? What do four of the last five kings of Israel do, and why? Why does the prophet Hosea condemn these final kings of the north?
3. **15:27.** Who is Pekah of Israel? Unlike his predecessors, who made Israel a vassal state of Assyria, what does Pekah do? What will his defiant stance against the Mesopotamian superpower eventually cause to happen?
4. **15:29.** Which Tiglath-Pileser is this, and what is his alternate name? What did he launch between 734 and 732 B.C., and what did he manage to do? With these lands made part of the Assyrian empire, what happens to the Northern Kingdom of Israel? What policy do the Assyrians execute at this time?

For application

1. **15:5.** Think of a person you know who is permanently disabled. How does that person handle the routines of daily life? What is his attitude toward life in general? How does the disability color that person's relationship to God?
2. **15:20.** Churches in many countries enjoy a tax-exempt status. What are the benefits they gain from that status? How great a hardship would result if the government were to remove it?
3. **15:25.** As the note to 15:8–31 points out, Israel undergoes a rather lengthy period of political instability as kings in succession assassinate their predecessors to gain power. If something like that instability were to affect this country, what impact do you think it would have on our cultural and economic life? How might it affect the religious life of the country? What has protected us from that instability so far?

Chapter 16

For understanding

1. **16:1.** Who is Ahaz? For what is he severely criticized? For what is he likewise faulted in his foreign policy and liturgical innovations?
2. **16:7.** What kind of language is Ahaz using by calling himself servant and son to Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria? What does Judah thus become? What did the prophet Isaiah advise?
3. **16:10.** What altar is referred to here? What does Ahaz commission, and what does he do there? What is the Damascus-style altar called?
4. **Chart: Near Eastern Kings and the Israelite Monarchy.** How does the history of Israel often intersect with the broader history of the ancient Near East? From a historical standpoint, with what kinds of testimony does the witness of Scripture closely cohere?

For application

1. **16:3.** Look up Is 1:12. What seems to be the attitude of Ahaz to the Israelite monotheistic religion, given his behavior in this verse? Why do some people—or, for that matter, some cultures—combine elements of Christianity with those of other religions (e.g., as in voodoo)?

2. **16:7–9.** What does the expression “Making a deal with the devil” mean? In what way is Ahaz doing that? How do many of us make similar “deals” in life that will eventually lead to our destruction?
3. **16:10–13.** What are some of the ways that Christians copy or imitate the spiritual practices of other religions, such as Buddhism? What are the potential benefits of such imitation? What are some of the dangers?
4. **16:14–18.** What are some principles that should govern why and how a church should be remodeled? What are some examples of good and bad remodeling of a church that you have seen? What standards lie behind your evaluations of these efforts?

Chapter 17

For understanding

1. **17:1–41.** With what do these verses deal? In what ways does the Kings account combine *historical* information with *theological* interpretation? *Eschatologically*, what happens to the northern tribes of Israel? What do several prophets envision about them?
2. **17:3.** Who is Shalmaneser? For what is he responsible, and how does Sargon II fit in? For what was Sargon II mainly responsible?
3. **17:24.** Who are the peoples listed here? What was the purpose of deporting and importing captives? What is the difference between what happened to Samaria and what happened to Galilee and the Transjordan earlier?
4. **17:29–34.** What is the main feature of Samaritan religion from the start? How do some understand the name Succoth-benoth? Who are Nergal, Ashima, Nibhaz, Tartak, and the others named here?

For application

1. **17:1–41.** Read the note for these verses. From the historical, theological, and even eschatological viewpoints, would you conclude that Christianity in the northern hemisphere is in a period of growth or decline? What hope do you see for its future? From the same perspectives, how do you view the growth of Christianity in the southern hemisphere?
2. **17:9.** The first half of this verse refers to things the people of Israel did “secretly” against the Lord. To what does the expression “Catholic guilt” refer? How might a person try to hide some violation of God’s law? From whom is he really trying to hide it? What happens when a whole culture tries to hide its defection?
3. **17:14.** Psalm 95:8 warns us not to “harden your hearts” as Israel did. How has our culture hardened its heart against the Lord? How might practicing members of the Church do the same? Of which prophets are you aware who are warning us against such folly?
4. **17:34–40.** As Christians, what is our covenant with the Lord? How did we contract it? How do we tend to forget it?

Chapter 18

For understanding

1. **18:1—25:30.** What do these final chapters of Kings trace? Although Judah outlives Israel by more than a century, what happens? On the regional stage of Near Eastern politics, how does the balance of power shift?
2. **18:1.** Which king of Judah is Hezekiah? For what does the narrator applaud him? What do the high points of his kingship include?
3. **18:4.** What kind of reforms does Hezekiah undertake? What may have prompted his actions? What happened to the bronze serpent manufactured by Moses? What is the name Nehushtan a play on?
4. **18:13.** Who is Sennacherib? Why did his forces invade Judah in 701 B.C.? What do the surviving *Annals of Sennacherib* describe? Amid the duress of these circumstances, what did the prophet Isaiah counsel Hezekiah to do?
5. **18:32.** What does Sennacherib’s delegation claim about the lands of Assyrian exile? What lesson does this hold for the spiritual life of believers, according to St. Ephraem?

For application

1. **18:4.** What is the most valuable object you own that is culturally or personally significant (e.g., a flag, a souvenir)? What would you do with it if you realized that it had become an object of superstition for you? How would you handle it if the object was a religious one?

2. **18:19–35.** Have any forms of psychological intimidation or other forms of bullying ever been leveled at you or people you know? If so, what effect did this intimidation have on you? How did you respond to it?
3. **18:22.** What is Sennacherib's messenger implying about the people's reliance on God in this verse? How does Satan try to undercut your faith in God?
4. **18:30–32.** What kind of proposition is called an "offer one can't refuse"? What do you think is attractive about the offer given by Sennacherib's messenger, and what is repulsive about it? When danger threatens, how much faith do you tend to put in the leaders who try to reassure you that all is safe?
5. **18:36.** Why would the king order his people not to answer the messenger? If you are intimidated by an adversary, what is the benefit to you of keeping silent?

Chapter 19

For understanding

1. **19:2.** Who are Eliakim and Shebna? Who is "the prophet Isaiah"? What aspects of Isaiah's distinctive language and style appear in this chapter? What does sending delegates to Isaiah indicate about Hezekiah?
2. **19:7.** What did Isaiah's prophecy say about Sennacherib? Why does Jerusalem have nothing to fear? What will happen to Sennacherib?
3. **19:9.** Who is Tirhakah? When did his reign as king begin, and what does that mean in the present situation in Palestine?
4. **19:29.** What sign does Isaiah offer the people of Judah? What does the miracle of the harvest illustrate?

For application

1. **19:1–2.** If you were in dire trouble or distress, to whom would you turn for counsel or direction? How do you seek spiritual direction? How regularly do you seek it?
2. **19:15–19.** Hezekiah's prayer consists of several parts. What are they? What seems to be his attitude to God as he prays? How can his prayer help you as you pray for deliverance from trouble?
3. **19:21–28.** What does Isaiah's prophecy have to say about God's control of historical forces such as Assyria's armies? Despite Sennacherib's role as God's instrument, with what vice does God charge him in v. 28? How is the sin of presumption associated with that vice?
4. **19:30.** How do you interpret Isaiah's meaning in this verse? In general, how does the Church "take root downward, and bear fruit upward"? How might you do the same in your own spiritual life?

Chapter 20

For understanding

1. **20:1–21.** How is the narrative sequence of 2 Kings 18–20 historically dischronologized? What are some of the observations supporting this?
2. **20:3.** What indication is given that Hezekiah expresses repentance? How powerful is a prayer of repentance, according to St. Cyril of Jerusalem?
3. **20:11.** On what does the miracle of sunlight and shadow take place? What does Hezekiah witness?
4. **20:12.** Who was Merodach-baladan, and when did he reign? What happened when he reestablished his kingship briefly in 704 B.C.? Why do many believe his envoys came to Jerusalem with more than a "get well" message for Hezekiah? For his part, what does Hezekiah do for the Babylonian dignitaries?

For application

1. **20:3.** In Is 38:10–20, read the prayer of Hezekiah during his sickness and compare his attitude there with his reasons for asking for healing here, in the current verse. What differences do you see? If you were terminally ill and prayed for healing, what reasons would you give for asking for it?
2. **20:8.** Why do people ask the Lord for signs that a divine promise will come true? What are some of the spiritual dangers in asking for signs?
3. **20:19.** What do you think of Hezekiah's reply to Isaiah in this verse? As long as we enjoy peace and security in our lifetimes, what concern should we have for the future?

Chapter 21

For understanding

1. **21:1.** Who was Manasseh? How is he judged as king? Under Manasseh's leadership, how does Judah sink into a time of unprecedented apostasy? What does the prism of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon mention about him? How long did he rule alongside his father, Hezekiah?
2. **21:3–7.** In what ways does Manasseh reverse the cultic reforms of Hezekiah? How does the Deuteronomic covenant label these actions?
3. **21:10–15.** What does the enormity of Manasseh's crimes guarantee? What effect will the heroic reforms of Josiah in chap. 23 have?
4. **21:16.** What does Jewish tradition hold about the prophet Isaiah's death?

For application

1. **21:2.** What do you think causes some children of virtuous parents to rebel openly and publicly against their parents' standards? What grief and even guilt might the parents feel? How can they retain their standards and yet keep open the lines of communication with their rebellious children?
2. **21:6.** What are some reasons that devotees of soothsayers, mediums, and wizards give for consulting them? According to CCC 2115–17, what forms of divination or occult activity are Christians to reject, and for what reasons? What virtue do these occult activities oppose?
3. **21:7–8.** According to these verses, what condition did the Lord place on his choice of Jerusalem? Why does God not give blanket promises but only conditional ones?
4. **21:14.** Read the note for this verse. According to CCC 710, how does the exile of this remnant play into the ultimate plan of God for his people? Of what is the remnant a prefiguration?

Chapter 22

For understanding

1. **22:1.** Which king of Judah is Josiah? As what is he hailed, and why? What do the admiring words of the Book of Sirach say about him? How much criticism does the Kings historian offer about him?
2. **22:4.** Who was Hilkiah? For what was the money donated? Who are the keepers of the threshold?
3. **22:8.** What is the "book of the law" referred to here? What had evidently happened to the scroll? What do scholars frequently claim, with insufficient warrant? What are three reasons why this hypothesis is problematic?
4. **22:14.** Who is Huldah? How is Josiah wise like other righteous kings before him? What is the Second Quarter thought to be?

For application

1. **22:7.** How trusting are you of those to whom you give your money for safekeeping? Whom do you trust with your money without the need for an accounting? By the same token, how trusting is the government of your honesty when you submit your tax returns? In banking or stock market situations, how airtight are the regulations designed to ensure honesty between parties in financial transactions?
2. **22:11–13.** How would you describe Josiah's emotions on being told of the contents of the Law? If you were in his position, how seriously would you take the danger that he saw in its discovery? If you have ever been in an analogous position, what was it, and how did you react?
3. **22:15–20.** The prophetess tells Josiah that doom will fall on Jerusalem, but because of his penitent attitude, Josiah will not live to see it. As a responsible king, what comfort might Josiah have taken at this word? How do you think his attitude might compare or contrast with that of Hezekiah in 20:19?

Chapter 23

For understanding

1. **23:3.** Which pillar is the one mentioned here? What does Josiah lead the nation in doing? What would both king and people have sworn? What did pledges of renewed commitment to Yahweh often entail?

2. **23:4–25.** What do Josiah's efforts at reform aim at accomplishing? Since Josiah's crusade is a rigorous enforcement of Deuteronomy, what does Deuteronomy forbid? What constitutes a king's service to God according to St. Augustine?
3. **Word Study: High Places (23:5).** How is the Hebrew word *bamah* often rendered? What does the word sometimes denote? In the majority of cases, to what does the term refer, and what happens there? What are otherwise admirable kings of Judah criticized for not doing? Who had the courage to shut the high places down? Why does Deuteronomy require their demolition? Where was the worship of Yahweh by sacrifice and incense to take place exclusively?
4. **23:36.** Which king of Judah is Jehoiakim? What does his reign witness? What name change did Neco make for the king of Judah?

For application

1. **23:1–27.** Since Josiah knew that disaster was threatened for Jerusalem no matter what he did, what do you think motivated him to such resolve? If you were responsible for a community on the verge of disintegration regardless of your efforts to keep it together, would you try to save it anyway or abandon it? Why?
2. **23:4.** If you were attempting to recover from an addiction like alcoholism or drug abuse, what would you do with all the paraphernalia associated with it? How thorough would you need to be? What kind of help would you want to have?
3. **23:8–9.** Why might some of the Levitical priests have refused to come to Jerusalem to perform their liturgical duties as required, preferring to remain where they were? Why does the Church often seem to be so slow to correct liturgical abuses? And when she finally does, why do some resist?
4. **23:21–23.** Of all your family traditions, which do you celebrate with the most elaborate preparations? What makes the celebration so special?

Chapter 24

For understanding

1. **24:1—25:26.** With what do these verses deal? In what four waves does judgment come upon Judah?
2. **24:1.** Who was Nebuchadnezzar? What does "his servant" mean? Why did Jehoiakim take the bold step of rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar? How did the king misread the situation?
3. **24:2.** What theological interpretation of history is the author of Kings making? What role does mighty Babylon play? Who are the Chaldeans mentioned here? Who are the others?
4. **24:17.** Which king is Zedekiah? What does his foolish rebellion bring about? What is ironic about his name?

For application

1. **24:2–3.** The author of 2 Kings attributes these attacks against Jerusalem to the command of the Lord. As you read CCC 311, does God command evil? If not, what is God's response sometimes to moral evil? How can good come out of it?
2. **24:13.** What kinds of material treasures does the Catholic Church possess? How might the Church respond if all the treasures of the Vatican were looted? What might be the minimum that the Church requires to keep alive her liturgical forms of worship?
3. **24:14–16.** Read the note for these verses. From Nebuchadnezzar's point of view, what was the advantage for himself of this "selective deportation" policy? What might have been the advantage for the deported citizens? Why leave a remnant of peasantry behind?
4. **24:20b.** Given the resources left him by Nebuchadnezzar, how could Zedekiah's rebellion hope to succeed? Why might a teenager rebel against his parents, even though he knows there is no hope of winning against them?

Chapter 25

For understanding

1. **25:1–17.** With what do these verses deal? What is the result for the Davidic monarchy and the Southern Kingdom? Where will the people of Judah spend the next 48 years? Theologically, of what are national catastrophe and exile manifestations? What is the aim of the curses?
2. **25:7.** How is the blinding of Zedekiah both physical and psychological torture? How did Ezekiel foretell it?
3. **25:13–17.** What happens to the Temple? Why is no mention made of the Ark of the Covenant and the golden altar of incense?

2 Kings

4. **25:27–30.** What does the short postscript to 2 Kings offer? At what does the clemency shown to Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, hint? What does it also indicate about David's royal line? Far from destroying the covenant people and their kings, what will the Lord decree and eventually raise up?

For application

1. **25:3.** Imagine that the electrical grid in this country were completely destroyed. What emergencies would result? For example, how would cities obtain food and water? How would a society like ours cope with such conditions?
2. **25:7.** Compare the fate of Zedekiah with that of his predecessor Jehoiachin (24:15; 25:27–30). Why the difference? Why is the punishment of an offender who resists often more severe than that of one who submits to it?
3. **25:9–17.** When a sacred place is desecrated, what kind of mourning is appropriate among the faithful? Although not guilty of the sacrilege, why is it appropriate for the faithful to do some kind of penance (cf. CIC, can. 1211)?